

Statement of the Honorable Greg Walden
Full Committee Markup
May 17, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning, everyone. We're here today for another big markup, keeping us on track to complete our work on legislation to combat the opioid crisis ahead of Memorial Day. And just this week, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy announced that he's reserving time on the House Floor in June to consider such legislation. Our communities are counting on us to deliver on solutions to help turn the tide of addiction and death that is ravaging town from coast to coast.

On the docket today, we have 34 individual pieces of legislation to help turn the tide of the opioid epidemic. In the weeks since our Health Subcommittee markup, members and staff on both sides of the aisle have put in long hours to try and bridge the gap on differences that remained on some of the bills. Real progress has been made and I believe we will continue those efforts today.

As I said during last week's markup, "We know there is no silver bullet, no one-size-fits-all approach that will remedy the catastrophic effects of this crisis over the last decade." But collectively, we know that much can be done to help vulnerable patients in our communities get the treatment they want and need, and to ensure these powerful drugs are not getting into the wrong hands.

Paired with the bills that passed out of this committee last week, our efforts will help protect our communities and bolster enforcement efforts, strengthen our prevention and public health efforts, and address coverage and payment issues in Medicare and Medicaid.

These bills are the direct result of hearing from the families impacted by this crisis, those working to remedy it, and compromise by our fellow leaders.

Earlier this week, I heard from two such families in southern Oregon whose sons are still struggling with addiction, and I've heard from others at roundtables across my state. Their stories are all too familiar. I've also received valuable feedback from health care providers, and in fact I'd like to submit a letter from the Oregon Hospital Association for the record, where they outline their support for several of the bills we're working on here today.

While this Congress has delivered unprecedented resources to combat this crisis, Americans from all backgrounds and walks of life still feel the grasp of this crisis and are asking us for help. And we will deliver.

I mentioned the work of the staffs earlier. Paul Edattel, Tiffany Guarascio, and their teams have put in countless hours over late nights and weekends this past year. Thank you for making this effort such a priority.

We have a unique opportunity to save lives, and we can't lose sight of the real-world impact of our actions throughout this process. We owe it to the families of the more than 115 Americans who die from opioids every single day to come together and advance legislation that can help stem this tide.